

TCP: Five Minutes

by Alara Rogers

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Summary: Common People story. A young girl must save herself from a killer.

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Five minutes from now a man shot me in the head.

I don't know why he did it. I answered the doorbell and there he was, with a gun. He pointed the gun before I could do anything, and fired. Very likely it was because my mother's a mutant researcher and my uncle is a mutant; he might have been here after them, or he might have shot me to get at them.

It doesn't matter. It's five minutes ago and I haven't been shot yet. Instead I run for the telephone and dial 911.

I hear the doorbell ring. It doesn't matter. Emergency Services picks up the line, and quickly I tell them about the man outside with a gun. They promise to dispatch police. I don't know if that will happen in time.

He shoots the lock off the door and kicks the door open. I can see him from where I'm standing with the telephone; I know there's no way to get out of the line of fire as he aims the gun at me.

So I jump back five minutes ago. I don't have as much time this time. I jump into the middle of the conversation with Emergency Services, and pick up with barely a stumble-- I'm used to this. He's been ringing the doorbell for two minutes now. In five minutes he'll get the door open and he'll come after me.

My uncle Dan is a mimic-- his mutant powers are useless unless he's got another mutant or superpowered being in the room with him. My mom's just a scientist. They're both out for the day, Mom at a conference, Dan with his friends. There's just me, 13-year-old Alana, and there's no one I can call that could get here faster than 911 could.

I run for the fire escape. The window jams as I try to lift it. I hear him shoot off the lock.

I jump back five minutes ago. This time as I get off the phone with 911, I don't waste time trying to force the window open. Instead I pick up one of the heavy iron bookends holding my collection of computer books on my desk, and use it to smash the window. I'm small enough that I can squeeze through without getting cut up too badly.

I start down the fire escape carefully, not wanting to move too fast and fall. But I hear him shoot the lock, I hear him head for my bedroom, and as I see him up above me pulling the window open and coming out onto the fire escape with his gun, I jump five minutes ago, to the point where I was smashing the window. This time I run down the fire escape as fast as I can go, trusting that if I fall, I'll just jump five minutes ago and be more careful.

I reach the bottom and tear around the corner. He's probably following me. I can't take the risk that he's not. Quickly I crawl under one of the cars parked on our street. With luck, he won't see me.

I can see his feet. I can see him looking for me. It takes longer than five minutes, which makes me nervous. And then he sees me. I scream as he kneels down. "There you are, you little bitch," he says, aiming the gun.

Five minutes ago I'm still under the car and he's out there, looking for me. I roll out from under the car and start to run.

Behind me he fires. The bullet slams into my back, and then I'm half a minute ago-- I can't jump my full five minutes until I've returned to my origin time. Half a minute is long enough to throw myself to my stomach as the bullet whizzes over my head, to roll behind a parked car, trembling. He starts to come around the car. I circle, keeping the car between him and me.

He's faster than me, and he runs at me, the gun out. At that range he can't miss. The bullet is a searing pain in my chest, and then it's five seconds ago, and I'm dodging, now that he's already committed to the shot. It hits my arm. Not good enough. I jump again, ten seconds. This time I dodge too soon, and he hits me in the chest again. Seven seconds. Just long enough that I can get all the way out of the way, just short enough that he can't change where he's aiming.

I drag myself under a car again. I wait until he ducks down to shoot me, and jump ten seconds, giving me time to position myself just where his head will be. As his head lowers again, I kick it with all the strength in my body.

He staggers backward, and I pull myself out from under the car,

rolling to my feet and running. By the time he recovers, I've got a nice comfortable margin, a minute or two. When he shoots me again, I use my margin to jump back, to know when he's going to shoot and duck it again.

"Goddamn, you fucking mutie bitch! Fucking stay still!" he screams, and shoots at me again. He's got good aim; he hits again. I'm so tired of jumping, so tired of the pain of bullets hitting and the fear that I won't be able to evade the next time. The thought of staying still, of letting him kill me, is tempting. But not tempting enough to actually do it. I jump again, and dodge again, and this time I make it to the cover of a tree before he can shoot me again.

I'm so out of breath. My knees and elbows are all scraped up from hitting the ground repeatedly. And I'm drained from so many time jumps. I've never done so many in a row. There's no way I can keep this up. The tree isn't big enough to shield me if I run now, not big enough to shield when he reaches me. I'm boxed in.

And then the cops pull up.

He runs. They tell him to halt; when he keeps running, they shoot him. The bullets tear into him, leaving him on the ground covered with blood, and he doesn't jump five minutes ago. He stays dead.

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They call me the hero kid, the resourceful little girl who stayed ahead of a hardened killer for fifteen minutes, long enough for the police to come. They tell me it wasn't me at all; he was a small-time hit man, probably hired by someone to take out my mother's daughter to scare my mother off her pro-mutant politics. My mom comes from her conference, and hugs me, and my uncle comes from where he's hanging out from his friends, and he tells me how great I was, and how much control I've got over my powers (he says that part privately where no one can hear.) I appear in the newspaper in the local news section. Fifteen minutes of fame, much better than five minutes of fear.

But I want to take self-defense classes, and I want to get a gun as soon as I'm old enough for a permit. Because someday five minutes might not be long enough to get away.

End  
file.